



State Capitol | Lansing, Michigan 48913

PH (517) 373.1725 | FAX (517) 373.0741

www.senate.michigan.gov/gop/senator/mcmanus/

For Immediate Release
April 29, 2004

Contact: Patrick Kane
517-373-1725

Sen. McManus issues statements on Agricultural Enhancement Bill and her amendment to the legislation

LANSING – Sen. Michelle McManus, R-Lake Leelanau, issued the following statement following the passage today of House Bill 4160, the Agricultural Enhancement Bill:

“I voted for this bill in good conscience because it creates jobs and helps the horse-racing industry survive in the face of increased competition from casinos and other gaming options in Michigan. Michigan’s horse racing industry has lost more than 20,000 jobs since we first allowed casino gambling in our state.

“The original purpose of this bill is to enhance agriculture in our state. While I am disappointed to see some of the agricultural interests eliminated from the bill we passed today, I am confident these changes will be addressed in conference committee.

“While we may disagree on the morality of gaming, there is no question regarding its legality in recognized establishments. Gaming has taken place legally at Michigan race tracks for more than 50 years. This is not an expansion of locations. This proposal would simply allow race tracks to use some modern tools of gaming that are already being used legally by both the state and Michigan casinos.

“This is not about gambling. This is about revenue for the state, jobs for Michigan workers, and modernization for the horse racing industry – and though the bills may have changed, this legislation is still about agricultural enhancement.”

McManus also issued the following statement regarding her proposed amendment to the bill:

“I introduced an amendment today to recognize those tribes that have been working in good faith with the state. I have been involved in the agricultural enhancement issue for some time now and realize the importance of working with the tribes in my district.

(More)

“The amendment sought to prohibit a racino within a 100-mile radius of any tribal casino that has been paying 8 percent of its revenue to the state for three years or more. Further, it would ban a racino from opening within 25 miles of any tribal casino that begins to pay 8 percent of its revenue to the state prior to that racino’s application.

“While the radius was later reduced to only 50 miles, I was grateful for the support of my colleagues in recognizing the importance of the tribes’ financial contribution to the state. We must continue to work with members of the community in a spirit of cooperation in order to ensure responsible legislation.”

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